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# NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

No. DLXXIX.

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FEBRUARY, 1905.

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## JAPANESE PROBLEMS.

BY COUNT OKUMA, FORMERLY PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN.

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FOREIGNERS too often fall into the error of believing that the civilization of Japan began with the opening of the country to the influences of Western ideas and institutions. In other words, they imagine that Japan is only some forty years old, and that the progress she has made during that time had no earlier foundations. Considered in this light, they imagine, not unnaturally, that the process has been far too rapid to be permanent. I think, however, that they are in the wrong, because the real Japanese civilization began some fifteen hundred years ago. Thus the opening of the country found the Japanese in a state of mind which had already been civilized into readiness for the Western ideas. Fifteen hundred years before, the entry into Japan of the elements of the civilizations of India and China had begun. Everything that Japan absorbed, from these civilizations, however, became essentially Japanese. Buddhism came from India to Japan and was influenced there by Shintoism, the Japanese religion, and it thus became a religion totally different in detail from the Indian religion. The Chinese literature, on being introduced into Japan, became tinged, as it were, with the personality of the Japanese people, that has made it typically Japanese and no longer Chinese. It was the same in the case of the fine arts, which were introduced

into Japan from China and Korea. Thus the mind of Japan was developed and made ready to take advantage of the system and rule of the West. It was the lack of system in its civilization which constituted the real backwardness of Japan before the opening of the country. It is thus apparent that Japan is not such a young country in civilization as many suppose; and, that being the case, her rapid growth in recent years ought not to cause uneasiness and the impression of instability.

In the same way as other isolated nations have acted when brought into contact with the outside world, Japan resisted strenuously the idea of foreign intrusion. Her first endeavor was, naturally, to prevent the entry of foreigners into the country, but the Americans under Perry broke up this idea and made it impossible to prevent foreigners from treading the soil of Japan. Then the Japanese tried to fight the foreigners, and either kill them or drive them out. This stage was very similar to that represented in the present action of the Boxers in China. Several foreigners were killed or injured, and there was much disturbance throughout the country.

Finally, the Japanese people discovered that it was hopeless to try and expel the foreigner by force. They, therefore, gave up the attempt, and directed their efforts to preventing the destruction of their land and their civilization in another way. They, therefore, submitted to the inevitable, and began to seek out all that was best in the Western civilization that was thus thrust upon them, realizing clearly that only by competing with the foreigners on their own ground could the Japanese hope to cope with them.

The intensity with which the Japanese rushed into the new methods was the result of their ardent patriotism; a desire that their country should not be found incompetent to meet any situation—the same desire, love of country, that had prompted their other actions against the foreigners. They acted not from individual motives of hate, but as a common force against an evil that threatened their home and soil.

The army system of the foreigners was the first thing that they realized to be superior to their own, and soon the spears and swords gave place to rifles and guns. In navigation, also, great strides were made, and the Japanese sailors strove hard to make themselves able and competent as navigators. In the field of medicine, also, much interest was evinced in Western ideas; and

the Japanese, realizing the superiority of these ideas to their own, introduced much of the modern science of medicine at an early date. The old idea of the Japanese people had been that all things Japanese were good, and that all things of the outside world were inferior. It was owing to this idea that their patriotism compelled them to act as they had done in repelling any outside influence. As soon as they saw that there were good ideas and things which the West had to offer, the very same patriotism of the people demanded that the best should be introduced for the benefit of their country. At that time, there were two governing heads in the country, the Shogun and the Emperor. Besides these, there were numerous feudal chiefs, who had a great amount of authority in the land. After the arrival of the foreigners and the opening of the country, it was soon evident that, for the purposes of good government and for financial reasons, it was essential to consolidate the ruling powers. Then it was determined to bring forth into supreme power the real ruler, the Emperor, and the Shogunate and the feudal chiefs were overthrown. Since then, the administration has been substantial and excellent. All these changes, great as they were and formidable, were due to the patriotism of the people and their determination to do the best for their country. It became the ambition of Japan to compete with the best of the other nations, and this purpose may be regarded as meaning as much to Japan as does the star to the sailor steering his ship by night. This determination to excel all other nations was declared in one of the earliest rescripts of the Emperor.

This same rescript gave the right of religious liberty and made Christianity permissible; formerly, this religion had been prohibited and it was not tolerated anywhere in the land. Foreign educational systems were introduced, and education was made compulsory. Both boys and girls were included, and above the age of six all were forced to attend common schools, irrespective of class or rank; formerly, there had been little female education, and the education of boys had been confined to practically only a few classes. In the army organization, conscription was introduced, which also had the effect of causing all men to feel more on an equality; formerly, the profession of arms had been limited to the knights and the samurai, or wearers of the swords. Post, telegraph, telephone, railways, steamers and lighthouses,

etc., were all introduced into the country, and received with avidity. Financial unity brought a much better state of things into being; formerly, the various feudal chiefs had each coined money and circulated it, thus producing a monetary chaos. Under the single central system administration, however, only one kind of coin was issued, and the chaos ceased. Japan adopted all these methods and institutions from the outside world with the hope of progressing through them towards the guiding star of other nations.

It was found necessary to make new laws to meet the new conditions, and commercial and civil laws were examined and codified. National and local administrations were introduced on European models, and the necessary laws made. Many banks were established, some with Government subsidy, others by private enterprise. Railways were constructed and many other works instituted. The lack of trained Japanese to direct these new institutions necessitated the employment of foreigners for some little time. As soon as possible, many young men were sent to foreign countries to learn the various businesses and fit themselves to take the place of the foreign helpers. Sometimes as many as a thousand such students would be despatched in a year; on their return, they would gradually assume all the positions possible in the Japanese institutions. Thus, by this method, the country is now able to supply all the men necessary for the conduct of its own affairs. During the last twenty years, great changes have taken place, but the consummation has not yet been reached; and, since the root has been well planted, there is more than the expected promise of a great and luxuriant growth from it.

To pass to the present condition of Japan, although educational systems have been introduced, and Higher Education has received much attention, they have as yet not produced any great genius to prove their excellence. Every year, many students—from one hundred to five hundred—leave Japan in order to finish their studies abroad. It must be remembered, however, that the educational system has only had a comparatively short time in which to prove itself, and that it may yet be productive of great results. The rapid growth of the country necessitated much expenditure in the shape of railways, telegraphs, etc., and much money was consumed in this way. Although under the

feudal system Japan was not a poor country, it has labored under a considerable disadvantage with regard to its recent development. In America and in Russia, for example, much foreign capital has been used to develop the country; whereas in Japan, except for the small sum of £14,000,000, raised in London, nothing but Japanese capital has been used. This has necessarily made the development of the country and the subsequent necessary new enterprises fall rather heavily upon the Japanese people. Foreign capital is much needed in Japan, especially with a view to the development of the railways. It will be necessary to change the laws relating to foreign ownership of land before much capital can be attracted from outside. I have ever been an advocate of allowing foreigners to own land in Japan. Some years ago, when the excitement over this question ran high, my advocacy of this policy was the cause of a bomb being thrown into my carriage, which so shattered my leg as to lead to its amputation.

Free Trade has been very good for the country, and the industries have developed without any protective duties. Formerly the import duties averaged six per cent., and now they average eight per cent.; but these have been simply for Government revenue and are without any protective intention. It is good to see how Japan's trade has developed under a free-trade system. From ten millions, sterling, the annual trade returns have reached fifty millions, and, at the past rate of increase, in fifty years Japan may hope to have trade returns equal to Germany.

OKUMA.